

Southam's Peking bureau in the red

John Walker, a former Peking correspondent for Southam News Services, was in Edmonton last week after spending three and one half years at the Peking bureau. He is now on a speaking tour across Canada following Southam's closure of the Peking bureau, relating his experiences and interpretation of events in China. The following is an edited version of an interview Gateway had with Walker after his Tuesday talk to the Womens' Canadian Club in the Hotel Macdonald.

Setting up a Peking News Bureau:

Well, the normal thing is just to go there after you get the approval and you work out of your apartment because there are no offices and you get a press card from the Chinese Information Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They're the people you want to deal with when you want information. It doesn't mean you'll get an answer but that's who you ask. They will provide you with an interpreter who will do the translations for you of the People's Daily, and whatever is required in interpreting. This you get whether you speak the language well or not and this you get because he's the local spy.

General impressions of Peking life:

Dull. Not completely dull, of course. It's a beautiful and fascinating place but living in a ghetto is not the way to enjoy it. Sure you can go to the shops



photo John Kenney

John Walker was Southam's man in Peking until last month.

Walker, who closed the Peking bureau, is on a speaking tour of Canada after which he will work for Southam News Services as a roving reporter based in Ottawa, specializing in foreign affairs.

and shop around and speak to the Chinese in your abysmal Chinese. The person most people know best is their interpreter cause he's there every day and you get to know him very well. But in 3½ years I never met his wife or his little kid, Wild Bull. I

knew all about them but I never knew them. They just don't permit interchange for fear we'll corrupt them.

Even the students have a problem getting close to the Chinese. Even if one day I want to go to the movies they'll find an

excuse why they can't go with you foreigners downtown off the university premises and this sort of thing. It's all a game of frustration which is very sad and very frustrating to everybody that is foreign - not to the Chinese because they're used to it, I guess.

Mao's widow, her three supporters and their demise:

They were very much disliked because of what they did during the Cultural Revolution. There were a hell of a lot of people humiliated by Chiang Ching when she was the ideologue leader of the group that was running the Red Guard in the Cultural Revolution and all those people are back in power.

Tensions surfaced on April 5 in a violent way April 5 was all about Chiang Ching. They had slogans up saying down with Indira Gandhi, the dowager empress, and everybody in Peking knew who the hell that was. It was Chiang Ching because they don't trust her and they think she's an ambitious woman.

That day 10,000 people were on the steps of the Great Hall of the People banging on the doors. It turned into a day-long riot in Tien An Men square. Somebody burned the people's barracks and it was a riotous scene. And at that point Teng was fired and Hua Kuofeng became the premier. In all the main cities of China similar types of incidents occurred in which people were killed and outside Shanghai there were real battles.

What does this change mean for Canada:

I don't think it means a damn one way or another. We're just another country paying homage to the great central kingdom. We're not special, you know. People that are special are the Americans and the Russians and the Japanese because they fear them. Just because we have Norman Bethune whom we can always talk about at luncheons doesn't mean we have any impact at all. We fight about Taiwan and the Olympics and you wouldn't even know. There wasn't a line about Canada in the Chinese press. Anybody who thinks we have special access in China is nuts.

Interpreting highly politicized Chinese life:

Most of the time I had so much trouble finding out what the hell was going on and trying to make sense of it I didn't have time to think about whether I was distorting it. I trust I wasn't. I went there with a reasonably open mind about China.

Fate of Southam's Peking Bureau:

Southam closed its Peking Bureau the day I left. As to why I don't know, you should be asking the president of Southam News. I don't agree with his decision but what can I say about it?

DIE Board rules against Robinson, in favor of returning officer

A recent Discipline, Interpretation and Enforcement (DIE) Board decision ruled the Students' Union returning officer used proper authority in stipulating the five printers used candidates for publicity purposes in an Oct. 6 by-election.

And the Board ruled that arts candidate Doug Robinson, who printed election material at a non-designated printer's shop, did not comply with the returning officer's authority or the by-election by-law 300, although the infraction was not of such a nature that his (Robinson's) reimbursement can be withheld.

Candidates running for Students' Union positions are allowed to spend only a specific amount of money on election materials and this money is reimbursed following the election.

The DIE Board met at the request of returning officer Michael Amerongen who posed three questions to the Board. Amerongen asked "in the event that, in the course of an election, a situation arises which by-law 300 does not clearly cover, does the responsibility fall to the Returning Officer to make such regulations as may be necessary?"

The Board answered the question "does he have that responsibility?"

Amerongen's second question was "if yes, is this such a situation?" (Amerongen was referring to Robinson's use of a non-designated printer during the by-election.)

The Board again answered

By-Law 300 could be applied to penalize a candidate in a way "short of disqualification - for what is felt to be somewhat less than a major infraction?"

The Board decided that, because decisions made under the returning officer's instructions were necessarily not provisions of By-law 300, Robinson's infraction did not "disentitle him to reimbursement."

But the Board added that, although it has held that Mr. Robinson is entitled to reimbursement ... it (DIE Board) does not necessarily condone Mr. Robinson's conduct.

"Every candidate has an obligation to comply not only with the provisions of By-law 300, but also with any instructions laid out by the returning officer," the Board's decisions concluded.

Don't gamble on Duncan Hines

NEW YORK (LNS-CUP) - If you have ever baked a pound cake following the instructions on Duncan Hines Delux II Devil's Food Cake mix you may have noticed the cautionary advice on the label: "Be sure to use Crisco Oil as some other oils may cause the cake to fail."

The Consumers' Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, wondered why one particular cooking oil was specified, and decided to conduct a bake-off. They bought three samples of the mix, a bottle of Crisco, and

bottles of the two other brands of cooking oils. None of the cakes fell: all were practically identical in height, texture and taste.

Why was such specific advice given about oils if there is no difference? Duncan Hines has a parent company: Proctor and Gamble. And Proctor and Gamble is also the parent company of Crisco.

Meeting of Students' Council will be held Monday Nov. 29th at 7:00 p.m. in University Hall (GFC Chambers). All welcome.

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The final question asked if